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ing majority had the other retired from the field ; but as they both expected to overreach each other, they fell somewhat short of the number of votes of their formidable opponents. And what did their partisans say, when they found themselves beaten : did they not regret the selfish and foolish course they had taken ? By no means. They averred they had done their best, and that it was the fault of the other party, who might have yielded their preferences to the common interest.

Could not this be a political lesson to the good people of our own country, if the cases were not so entirely dissimilar as not to be comparable ?

### MOSAIC PAINTING.

(From "Painting Popularly Explained," by T. C. GUILLICK and J. TIMES.)

Few persons who have not seen any of the great mosaic works in the ancient churches of Italy could imagine the sumptuous effect produced by immense walls covered with figures, often of colossal proportions, colored in variegated hues of crystalline brilliancy, set in backgrounds of gold and purple and azure, and surrounded with many-colored marbles. If the intention of Sir Christopher Wren had been carried out, and the inside of the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral had been "filled with rich and durable mosaic," like the cupola of St. Peter's at Rome, we should have had a higher idea of the capabilities of the art than can be formed from the inspection of snuff-boxes, or, at most, a few cabinet pieces.

Mosaico, called opus musivum, musaicum, mosaicum (from *mūson*, *mūsion*, polished, elegant, or well-wrought), and of which there are various kinds, is, in the widest sense of the word, any work which produces a design, with or without color, on a surface by the joining together of hard bodies. Though, seemingly, too mechanical to rank as a style of "painting," yet it is generally and justly considered entitled to the distinction. For, it must be remembered, whatever may be thought of the means, that the principle of painting is involved, and it is as necessary to prepare a cartoon for an original composition in mosaic as for a fresco, or the most elaborate picture—in fact, it is not merely as necessary, but also, in this instance, quite indispensable.

At the present day in Italy the most celebrated pictures are copied with perfect accuracy. And even this copying must require a very considerable knowledge of Art, and a correct appreciation of the different schools, to do justice to works thus invested as it were with immortality. There is a studio expressly devoted in the Vatican to the manufacture of the beautiful mosaics of St. Peter's. The number of enamels of different tints and hues preserved for the purposes of the work, amounts to no less than 10,000; and many of the large copies from Raphael and Domenichino in various parts of the building have occupied from twelve to twenty years in their execution. The art having never been lost, we may best describe the more mechanical part by referring to the present practice in the establishment at St. Peter's, especially as it is here more perfectly conducted than it was among the ancients.

The method is simple enough. The slab upon which the mosaic is made is generally of Travertine (or Tibertine) stone. In this the workman cuts a certain space, which he encircles with bands or cramps of iron. Upon this hollowed surface

mastic, or cementing paste, is gradually spread as the progress of the work requires it, this forming the adhesive ground, or bed, on which the mosaic is laid. The mastic is composed of calcined marble and finely powdered Travertine stone, mixed to the consistence of paste with linseed oil. Into this paste are stuck the *smalti*, or small cubes of colored glass, which compose the picture, in the same manner as were the colored glass, stone, and marble *sectilia* and *tessera* of the ancients. These *smalti* are vitrified but opaque, partaking of the nature of stone and glass, or enamels; and are composed of a variety of minerals and materials, colored, for the most part, with different metallic oxides. They are manufactured in Rome in the form of long slender rods, like wires, of different degrees of thickness, and are cut into pieces of the requisite sizes, from the smallest pin point to an inch. When the mastic has sufficiently indurated (and it acquires in time the hardness of stone), the work is susceptible of a polish like crystal. Care, must be taken, however, that by too high a polish the entire effect of the work is not injured, as innumerable reflected lights in that case would glitter in every part of the picture. When the design is to be seen at a very considerable distance, as in cupolas or flat ceilings, they are generally less elaborately polished, as the inequalities of the surface are the less distinguishable, and the interstices of the work cannot be detected by the spectator. On ascending the dome of St. Peter's the visitor is invariably astonished at the coarseness of mosaics which appear from below of the utmost delicacy and finish.\*

The age of a mosaic may be determined by the composition, the drawing, and the nature of the materials employed; and if of the Christian period, as a general rule, the more numerous these are, the more modern the mosaic. Many antique mosaics, which were supposed to consist of colored stones, are found to be of glass, or vitreous.

ANCIENT MOSAICS.—The employment of mosaics is traceable to the most ancient periods, and seems to have had its rise among the eastern nations. In the book of Esther (ch. i. v. 6) we read of "a pavement of red and blue, and white and black marble." The invention appears to have been transmitted through the Egyptians to the Greeks, from whom it was stolen by the Romans, as they stole their arts, sciences, and gods.

Mosaic received its great development in the sumptuous Alexandrian age, during which a prodigality of form and material began to corrupt the simplicity of Grecian art. At first small cubes of stone and terra-cotta were employed, but later, vitrified substances of various colors. Mosaic was first applied as an ornament for pavements, and commenced in the close

\* The works in *Pietre Dure* and *Pietre Commesse*, so extensively carried on in Tuscany (and hence called Florentine mosaics), differ from mosaics in the materials, execution, and subjects chosen. Both are employed for merely ornamental or decorative purposes, and represent fruit, birds, flowers, etc. The *pietre dure* work gives the objects imitated in relief in colored stones, and is generally used as a decoration for coffers or the panels of cabinets. The *pietre commesse* of the finer sort consists of precious stones inlaid, and is employed for caskets, cabinets, etc. The stones are cut into thin veneer, and the various pieces are sawn into shape by means of a fine wire stretched by a bow, aided by emery powder, and afterward fitted at the lapidary's wheel. The materials are exclusively natural stones, as agates, jaspers, lapis lazuli, etc., the colors of which serve the purpose of delineating various ornamental natural objects. The walls of the chapel of the Medici attached to St. Lorenzi at Florence are lavishly decorated with this costly material.

imitation of inanimate objects, such as broken food and scattered articles lying apparently on the floor. It thence proceeded rapidly to large historical compositions, and under the first emperors attained the highest technical development and refinement. Such pavements became general, and they were even made portable. Cæsar carried the pavement as well as the canvas of his tent with him, whether from the love of the art or a dry floor is somewhat doubtful. Cicero caused the pavements to be placed in all the porticos of his house. Under the protection of the Roman dominion this peculiar art spread itself over the ancient world, and was executed in the same manner upon the Euphrates, on Mount Atlas, and in Britain. Wherever the Roman arms were carried the mosaics followed, and hundreds have been found in Gaul, Germany and Britain.

There were several varieties of mosaics among the ancients, but the mention of the following may suffice: 1. Floors formed of pieces of stone of different colors, cut geometrically and cemented together—*pavimenta sectilia*. 2. Floors inlaid with small cubes of stone forming a colored design, such as were usual in antiquity, not merely in rooms, but also in courts and terraces—*opus tessellatum*, *pavimenta tessellata* (tessellated pavement). 3. The finer mosaic, which essayed to come as near as possible to pictures properly so called, and usually employed colored pieces of clay, or rather glass; but also the very costly material of precious stones, where the imitation of numerous local colors was required—called *opus vermiculatum* (*majus* and *medium*), *crustæ vermiculæ*. Splendid works of this description were made of stone as well as clay cubes, as early as the Alexandrine period. In the time of the emperors the employment of glass cubes in the decoration of apartments first made its appearance, and quickly came into great request. There are many remains of this kind of mosaic, of which a few may be pronounced artistically excellent. There is some slight mention of its having been transferred even to the walls and ceilings; but historical mosaic painting of the grander style seems suddenly to have started into life in the course of the fourth century. 4. Outlines and intaglios were, according to Müller, engraved in metal, or some other hard material, and another metal or enamel (?) melted into it, so that figures in so-called *nigello* resulted from the process.\*

Besides these, the forming designs for windows with pieces of colored glass, appears to have been known at least to later antiquity, and this may be considered a species of mosaic. We find accounts also of what are called mosaics in relief. These were thought to have been the invention of Pompeo Savini of Urbino, but they are considered by some to be of ancient date; and are supposed, under the Empire, to have superseded the bas-reliefs of painted clay, common in the times of the Republic. The practice, if it obtained, was borrowed from the Greeks; for, according to M. Raoul-Rochette, the Ionic capitals of the

\* This description of work we have found in modern times to lead immediately to engraving, and something of the kind—some means of multiplying impressions—seems to have been not unknown to antiquity, judging from the much commented on passage in Pliny, xxxv. 2. Marcus Varro, says Pliny, made (*aliquo modo*) and inserted in his writings the portraits of seven hundred distinguished men, and dispersed them to all parts of the world; and this he did for the gratification of strangers. The process, whatever it was—and Pliny's allusion is so concise, that any explanation of the means can be merely conjectural—must have been transient and imperfect, or some traces of the art would have been preserved, or some mention of it made.

Erectheum at Athens were adorned with an incrustedation of colored enamel. The fountains discovered at Pompeii had a covering of mosaic in colored paste. In the Villa Hadriana the entire vault of a crypto-porticus was covered with bas-reliefs in a very hard stucco, said to be incrusted with a paste of glass or enamel, in imitation of bas-reliefs of wax painted in natural colors.

The cubes employed were of every possible tint, and were set up by the workmen much as the types are by our printers, or rather, compositors. Many of these were gilt, and such were extensively employed afterward in every description of mosaic by the Byzantines, who placed their figures on gold grounds. The gold leaf was applied at the back of the cube, where it was fixed by a mordant covered with pounded glass, and fired in a furnace.

(To be continued.)

### Foreign Correspondence, Items, &c.

ENGLAND.—A London contributor says: I have no items to furnish you with, save that Cropsey has some Scotch commissions, and that since his return from the Isle of Wight he has been quite ill—at times entirely unable to work. The winter exhibition has opened under the auspices of Gambart. Paul Duggan was located at Walton-on-Thames. The last exhibition of the Royal Academy was one of the very worst I ever saw; what the artists have gained in mechanical accuracy has been lost to them in boldness, thoughtfulness, and originality. Pre-Raphaelitism has become utterly contemptible, even in Millais' hands. That "Spring" of his was ludicrous in the extreme. One figure had the facial line inverted, and the foliage and grass were feebler than anything I ever saw from the hand even of a boarding-school young lady. What this man will sink to eventually, I cannot say. His name has been established principally by Ruskin.

A friend favors us with the following letter from England:

LONDON, Dec. 4, 1859.

I have already spent five days in London, and now try to tell you of what I have seen. I scarcely know where to begin, not from the want of material, but from having too much to say. I have seen two exhibitions, one the Sheepshanks collection, at the Kensington Museum, and the other, an exhibition of pictures by modern English artists, in Pall Mall. I have had glimpses of several very fine pictures, but my time was so limited I could not give attention to particular works, and therefore cannot judge of the merits of any single painter. We went to the latter exhibition at three o'clock, and it is dark here at four o'clock; and during these foggy days there is scarcely any daylight, at least what we call daylight in America. I have seen the sun once since I have been in London, and then it resembled more a moldy green cheese than its brilliant namesake in America.

At the Sheepshanks gallery I passed an entire day, and studied many of the pictures carefully, and altogether I am much pleased with what I have seen of the English painters. We have had no exhibition in New York which at all represents the English school. Among the figure painters, I am most pleased with Landseer, Mulready, and Leslie; I have also seen some fine works by Etty, Stothard, and Wilkie. I am delighted with Landseer. He is, undoubtedly, the greatest of animal-painters. The engravings from his works, fine as they are, give but a faint idea of the originals. He is finely represented in this col-